

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING BY
DEPUTY P.V.F. LE CLAIRE OF ST. HELIER**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 21st OCTOBER 2008

Question

1. When the Jersey Homes Trust took on the management of Berkshire Court what were the terms of the agreement with the States, if any, at that time in respect of occupants and States interaction or oversight in the future of the running of this site?

Answer

The Jersey Homes Trust purchased and developed Berkshire Court themselves on the site of the old Berkshire Hotel and La Motte Garage. The contract of purchase by the Trust set out that the resultant homes to be built on the site would be for occupation solely as social rented accommodation.

Question

2. Was the development supposed to be for the over 50's only ?

Answer

No. However, the Housing Department had 80% of the nomination rights for the homes at Berkshire Court. The qualifying criteria for those without dependants to be placed on the Department's waiting list is that they are a minimum of 50 years of age, or if younger are unable to work due to disability or long term incapacity. The homes at Berkshire Court are all 1 bedroom units and due to the waiting list criteria, only those over 50 years of age or those unable to work for the reasons I have already outlined can be nominated. Assurances have been given by the Trust that presently all occupants of Berkshire Court meet this criteria.

Question

3. Do any States agreements exist in relation to the operation of other Housing trusts?

Answer

The vast majority of homes operated by Housing Trusts have a restriction that they may only be utilised for Social Rented purposes. In cases such as Berkshire Court, where the Trust has been provided with States funded subsidies on borrowing, the Housing Department has the right to nominate 80% of the initial tenants and a minimum of 50% of all future tenants. There are also legal agreements which prevent Housing Trusts from charging a rent greater than the Housing Departments "Fair Rent". Following the Committee of Inquiry into "Procedures for the Allocation of Residential Property by Housing Trusts", carried out in early 2003, a number of recommendations made were accepted and implemented which has resulted in agreements such as the nomination rights being appropriately monitored.

Question

4. Does the Minister have any power to influence or instruct the expenditure of housing trusts where there is clear evidence that security measures or maintenance of properties is being compromised?

Answer

No. I enjoy a close and collaborative working relationship with all the Housing Trusts and the respective Chairmen. As members will know we have commissioned a review of social Housing provision by

Professor Christine Whitehead from Cambridge University. This review will, amongst other things, consider whether there should be regulation introduced for all social housing providers and if so what form that regulation should take. All of the Housing Trusts have been afforded the opportunity to make submissions to Professor Whitehead and will be engaged again during the formal consultation period when the Professor publishes her draft report as a Green Paper early in the New Year. I am not aware of problems with regard to a lack of maintenance on Housing Trust properties. A good proportion of Trust homes are relatively new (the Berkshire certainly) and there should be adequate income from rent to offer a good maintenance service and ensure that provision is made for planned maintenance and eventual capital refurbishment.

I am sure the Chairman of the Jersey Homes Trust would be only too pleased to discuss any concerns any Members may have regarding Berkshire Court.